

Message Text

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21

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 OC-06 CCO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /044 W

----- 024766

R 070700Z DEC 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4263

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 1016

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ET

SUBJECT: ERITREAN ATMOSPHERICS: INSURGENCY BUBBLES ON QUIETLY

REF: ASMARA 0974 (DTG 300650Z NOV 76)

1. AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF A PLACID CITY ENJOYING ITS NORMAL SUBDUED ACTIVITY, PROBLEMS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE INSURGENCY CONTINUE TO IMPINGE ON THE LIVES OF ASMARA RESIDENTS. ELECTRIC POWER FOR INDUSTRY HAS YET TO BE RESTORED AS WORKERS ENTER THEIR THIRD WEEK OF ENFORCED VACATION. THERE APPARENTLY CONTINUES TO BE SECURITY PROBLEMS ALONG THE ASMARA-MASSAWA ROAD AS THE FREQUENCY OF CONVOYS IS ONLY TWO-THIRDS OF WHAT IT WAS BEFORE THE AMBUSH ON NOV 18. MOGAS SALES ARE STILL SUSPENDED IN ASMARA, AS THE FIRST TWO CONVOYS SINCE THE RESUMPTION OF TRAFFIC ON NOV 29 CARRIED ENTIRELY AVGAS AND BULK FUEL FOR EELPA.

2. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THERE WAS A SHARP SKIRMISH BETWEEN EPMG FORCES AND INSURGENTS ALONG THE ROAD BETWEEN KEREN AND AGORDAT.

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ACCORDING TO THESE REPORTS, ESCORT TROOPS WHO BROUGHT THE ASMARA

CONVOY TO KEREN WERE EMPLOYED IN THE PERIOD DEC 3 AND 4 TO CLEAR THE ROAD TO AGORDAT IN ORDER TO FREE THE 100-PLUS TRUCKS TRAPPED THERE SINCE LATE SEPT. THESE TRUCKS WERE BRINGING COTTON FROM THE BARATTOLO PLANTATION IN TESSENNEY TO ASMARA, BUT SUFFERED SUCH EXTENSIVE LOSSES IN GOODS, VEHICLES AND ESCORT TROOPS THAT THE EFFORT WAS ABANDONED. IN THE RECENT FIGHTING, THE EPMG TROOPS WERE SAID TO HAVE PULLED BACK INTO KEREN. THERE WAS A NOTICEABLE INCREASE IN BOTH FIGHTER AND TRANSPORT AIR ACTIVITY DURING THE PERIOD CITED BY THESE REPORTS. FURTHER, RECENT EPMG CASUALTIES, INCLUDING SEVERAL DEAD, WERE OBSERVED BY AMERICANS BEING BROUGHT INTO THE DISPENSARY AT FORMER TRACT ECHO.

3. THERE IS ALSO A REPORT THAT IN THE LATE AFTERNOON OF DEC 2, REBEL ASSASSINS KILLED A EPMG "INFORMER" IN THE NORTHERN SUBURBS. THAT EVENING, GROUP DESCRIBED LOCALLY AS A "KILLER SQUAD" FROM THE JOINT COMMAND, SEIZED FIVE MUSLIMS FROM THEIR HOMES IN THE SAME AREA. THEIR BODIES WERE FOUND THE NEXT DAY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN. BECAUSE OF THE SPEED WITH WHICH THE REPRISAL KILLINGS WERE CARRIED OUT, IT IS BELIEVED THAT THESE FIVE WERE ON A REPRISAL LIST MAINTAINED BY THE JOINT COMMAND, BASED ON INFORMATION FROM THEIR NETWORK OF INFORMERS.

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